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From: planningcomments@highpeak.gov.uk
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Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Categories: [REDACTED]

Application Reference No. : HPK/2026/0228 Site Address: Spring Shopping Centre & Land South of Station Road
Buxton Derbyshire Comments by: Gordon and Alix Clark

From:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: We are writing to express our strong and absolute opposition to the current plans for the Springs Shopping Centre. While we support investing in our town centre, this current proposal is an aggressive overdevelopment that directly violates the council's own adopted 2020 Visitor Economy Strategy (VES), the 2016 High Peak Local Plan (HPLP), and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It replaces a community lifestyle space with overwhelming blocks of housing designed for private rental returns. We urge the council to refuse this application on the following grounds:

1. Undemocratic ‘Bait-and-Switch’ Housing Density

We have been completely misled. The initial project baseline showcased to the public was a sensible 75 residential units. When the developers first spoke to councillors, that number crept up to 180. That number has now been inflated behind closed doors to a massive 332 rental flats and houses. The residential space expansion vastly outweighs the commercial addition. This overdevelopment overrides our local community needs and represents an unjustified change of use.

2. Violations of Local Plan Policies CF1 and CF2

The proposal strips away substantial retail floorspace without showing how it will maintain our town's economic vitality. The applicant has not demonstrated that the proposed reduction in retail emphasis will strengthen the long-term commercial role of Spring Gardens. No impact studies have been done for our three existing commercial hubs – Spring Gardens, the area around the Quadrant and Crescent, and higher Buxton. This failure directly violates Policies CF1 and CF2 of the HPLP. In particular we have also seen no Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) or Sequential Test which are requirements under the NPPF.

3. Substandard Architecture Harmful to a Heritage Spa Town

Buxton is one of only two recognised Roman spa towns in England. Forcing generic, block-like five-storey structures into our historic core degrades our Georgian and Victorian character.

‘ Cheap Material Specs: The developer has downgraded design specs from copper and zinc to cheap plastisol-coated steel panels, violating the VES mandate to prevent the degradation of our built environment.

¿ Flawed Detailing: Flat roofs are totally unsuited to Buxton's heavy winter snow loads. Protruding balconies look like cheap holiday blocks, and the layout permanently destroys the opportunity to recreate the historic rail ¿Fan Window¿ at Station Road.

4. Severe Parking Failures & Direct Discrimination

Cramming 332 residential units and 9,403 square meters of commercial space onto our central parking site while providing only 264 spaces is a recipe for gridlock.

¿ The Separate Application Trick: The developer has not actually included the replacement station car park in this application; it is hidden in a separate future proposal. Tearing down 422 highly accessible town centre spaces based on unapproved future assumptions is inappropriate.

¿ Accessibility Barriers: Shifting replacement parking behind the station creates a massive physical barrier. This layout directly discriminates against older citizens, parents with pushchairs, and disabled residents who depend on step-free, direct access to central retail anchors like Waitrose. How will Waitrose trolleys cross the main road?

5. Dangerous Highway Engineering Risks

The referenced replacement car park behind the station presents unresolved highway dangers. Vehicle access would force two lanes of heavy traffic to squeeze right beneath our historic station fanlight and down a narrow pedestrian walkway. This layout requires major road junction overhauls, hazardous excavation next to a steep embankment, and the destruction of mature trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

6. Blocking the Future Peaks & Dales Railway Line

Derbyshire County Council has officially endorsed the progression of the Peaks & Dales Line linking Buxton to Matlock. When this goes ahead, Buxton will stop being a dead-end branch terminus and become a vital through-station connecting the East Midlands, the Northwest and Number 10 North. Permanently dumping a developer's overflow car park onto the land surrounding the station is incredibly short-sighted, as it blocks future station expansion, public transport interchanges, and rail upgrades.

7. Stripping Vital Winter Shelter

Tearing down our indoor shopping centre to create exposed outdoor pedestrian walkways ignores our local climate. At 300 meters above sea level, our covered mall provides a vital, snow-free refuge where elderly and vulnerable residents can shop and stay warm during our long, harsh winters. Tearing it down violates the VES mandate to respect Buxton's unique winter climate.

8. Abuse of Power and Violation of the Local Government Act

High Peak Borough Council is a co-applicant on this scheme. Leaving aside the potential for conflict of interest in determining this application, it is also scheduled due to be abolished through Local Government Reorganisation. Pushing through a massive, multi-year private development at this time directly violates the spirit and guidance of Section 24 of the Local Government Act 2007, which explicitly forbids an expiring authority from taking drastic actions that lock down strategic assets and tie the hands of the successor council.

Conclusion

We need to protect the charm and heritage that gives us pride in, and draws tourists to, Buxton. We are currently nearing the end of our annual Opera and Fringe Festivals. Together these attract tens of thousands of visitors. These events place Buxton not just on the national, but on the international stage. This proposed development fails to even mention these and completely fails to provide the cultural infrastructure or visitor public realm required to sustain the town's festival economy. Instead, they treat Buxton as if it was simply a dormitory town for somewhere else.

In summary, this application forces inappropriate metropolitan density onto our spa town while stripping away quality materials, train connectivity, public shelter, and essential parking. I strongly urge the council to stand by its residents and refuse this application.

Gordon & Alix Clark

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